



VOICE & VISION OF VAPT

DECEMBER 2003

Editor: Bill Carr, Virginia Beach



Barbara Goodman

“Don’t take it personal.” This is easier said than done. One of the first things stressed in many customer services orientations, is the importance of not reacting angrily to a customer who is outraged. For those of us in the pupil transportation industry, these customers include our students, their parents or guardians, school personnel, school board administrators, community citizens, and just about anyone who wants to make our business their business.

Supervisors, like the drivers, are the first line of defense. When someone is upset they take it out on the first person they get to. It is extremely difficult not to take something personal when the person you are talking to is questioning your integrity, saying you don’t care about their children, asking for the name of your boss, or telling you they are going to “On Your Side” or “Dateline NBC.”

I’ve heard so many high level administrators state that 90-95% of the calls they receive are from people who just want someone to listen. Yes, they may be angry at the onset, sap your energy, want you to “do something,” and often “right now.” However, many times I have found if I listen and do not interrupt the caller to defend the policy or position, I may have a better opportunity to make progress.

I have learned from personal experience and from very knowledgeable associates: don’t try to “fix” everything and don’t try to give a quick answer. I’ve learned that people want to believe that you are taking their call seriously, are genuinely interest, you will “check it out,” and will respond back in a reasonable amount of time. Also, I’ve learned some

people won't like the answer. I'm still learning what components are necessary when researching a particular concern. And, I continue to say over and over, "don't take it personal."

One thing I hope you will take personal is my sincere hope that you and your family have a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SUPERVISOR POSITIONS IN PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

The purpose of this proposed section of the newsletter is to provide school divisions an opportunity to announce their unfilled PUPIL TRANSPORTATION job positions and to enable VAPT to inform its' members of these job openings. School divisions may email an attachment of their job announcements to the newsletter editor, Bill Carr, at bcarr@vbcps.k12.va.us. Job openings cannot be posted until school divisions provide their announcements. Please let your Human Resources or Personnel Departments know of the service we are offering them in order to help our members be informed of available pupil transportation positions within the state.

DRIVING A SCHOOL BUS IN THE 1930S

Rockingham County Public Schools

Historical Review

Larry R. Huffman, editor

For me, my adventures as a school bus driver back in the early days of the pupil transportation system were very memorable. It was the fall of 1934 and I had graduated from Broadway High School that spring. I decided to go back to Broadway to take a year of commercial courses. I also agreed to drive the school bus that year from my home in Cherry Grove to Broadway High School.

It was my misfortune to be given a Model T bus that really tried my patience that winter. The first frosty morning it balked. Many mornings that winter my dad would hook his team of horses to the "Cracker Box" and pull me up the road to get the motor started. A number of times, it ran fine to school but on that same evening when I left school, it would miss – the nature of a Model T. I haven't had much use for a Model T since. After having so much trouble that winter with that school bus, I asked for a better bus the next fall. Graduating one step, I was given a Model A, which was a great improvement over the former one. Actually, it was a pleasure to drive and it never failed to start, even on the coldest mornings.

After driving that school bus for several years, I was assigned a longer route that necessitated a larger bus. This time I moved up to a new 1938 International. This was a great improvement over anything I was used to. However, after several years of enjoying that school bus, the Transportation Director decided that I should trade with Carl Garber at Greenmount. He

drove a 1934 and his school children were outgrowing his bus, but mine wasn't full so we traded school buses. Back to the Ford, which worked out all right. I drove the school bus until Uncle Sam deemed it necessary that I serve in the U.S. Army. He did prolong my induction from January until April 1944 so I could almost complete that school year. That, of course, was the end of my school bus driving.

Things were different back in those days for a school bus driver. The driver was allowed to put a student off the bus if they didn't behave. You are not allowed to even touch them these days. I remember putting three boys off the bus during my years of driving. I want to mention that I am the only person living that drove a school bus to Broadway High School during those days.

Also, of interest, back then schools didn't close every time there was a little snow. I remember sometime between 1938 and 1940, it had sleeted approximately five inches one night. Drivers were still expected to make their runs to school and back no matter what. Driving a school bus through sleet was like driving in sand on a beach. We arrived at school all right, but naturally late.

Nevertheless, those were really the good years as well as difficult years, at times I don't think I would want to repeat them. My, how times have changed....

Ivan Whitmer

MEET A NEW REGION 4 DIRECTOR



JIM DAY

Jim has been employed in the field of pupil transportation in Virginia for approximately 23 years and currently is the Supervisor of Transportation for the City of Manassas. He was born on July 6th and reared in Franconia, Virginia where he resides with his wife, Lori. Jim enjoys listening to his collection of jukeboxes and spending time at their weekend home in Colonial Beach. He and his wife often attend local events in this little resort town. Jim and his wife enjoy the annual car shows and the nostalgia drags. They really enjoy muscle cars and his wife has an Impala SS and he has a 1968 428 Pontiac Lemans to cruise around in with their dachshund.

Jim is very pleased to be a part of the VAPT organization and very appreciative of the friendship he has made since joining our association.

NEWS FROM REGION 5

Submitted by Barbara C. Scott

The Region 5 Directors met on December 12, 2003, at Sweetbriar College in Amherst. Thanks to Gene Onestinghel for arranging the accommodations. It was certainly a great place to meet and eat! June Eanes and Don Unmussig from DOE were present to give updates on DOE and VAPT happenings, such as the 2004 annual conference and the Special Education Symposium. Carolyn Fowler, President of HR Diversified Solutions was also with us. Ms. Fowler is working with Albemarle County Transportation on a survey related to school bus drivers' compensation methodology. The directors gave her plenty of information that hopefully will be beneficial in completing the survey. We had a great time in sharing information and ideas with each other. Our next meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2004 at the Albemarle County Transportation facility.

2003-2004 VAPT OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPEOPLE

Officers:

President – Dr. Barbara Goodman, Chesterfield County
Vice President – Velera Gammons, Henry County
Secretary – June Eanes, VDOE
Treasurer – Willie Smith, Albemarle County
Immediate Past President – John Hazelette, Norfolk

Directors:

Region 1 - Vacant
Region 2 - Steve Washington, Hampton
Region 3 - Kermit Shaffer, Spotsylvania County
Region 4 - James Day, Manassas
Region 5 - Barbara Scott, Campbell County
Region 6 - Rebecca Mummau, Montgomery County
Region 7 - Michael Puckett, Russell County
Region 8 – Dwight Elam, Mecklenburg County

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

Audit – Mitzi Crosier, Hanover County
Conference – Velera Gammons, Henry County
John Hazelette, Norfolk
Constitution & Bylaws – Tim Parker, Fairfax County
Legislative – Harold Grimes, Henrico County
Membership – Mitzi Crosier, Hanover County
Nominating – Dennis Lewis, Chesterfield County
Resolution – Michael Ashby, King William County
Road-e-o - Sharon Utley, Chesterfield County
Cris Sprouse, Virginia Beach
Scholarship – David Pace, Virginia Beach

Special Committee Chairpersons:

Poster Contest – Margaret Rayner, Hopewell
Position Papers – Michael Ashby, King William County
Newsletter – Bill Carr, Virginia Beach
Web Site – Tim Parker, Fairfax County
Historian – Dwight Elam, Mecklenburg County
Charter Bus Service – Harold Grimes, Henrico County
James Lash, York County
Budget Preparation – Frank Labrecque, Newport News

RESPONSE TO NOVEMBER'S ISSUE OF THE MONTH

Ways to cover school bus runs when a substitute driver or driver assistant is not available:

The school division that responded stated their drivers with a full morning and afternoon schedule (4 school assignments), not to include kindergarten, activity or other special runs are assigned a high school, two elementary schools, and a middle school. All drivers cannot be assigned a high school, elementary school runs, and a middle school run due to the availability of routes and the logistics involved in linking school assignments. Below are methods utilized to help with their lack of substitute drivers:

- The majority of drivers are contracted for four morning/afternoon runs, but those drivers who only have three runs are paid as if they have four because they are required to substitute during the time they are available. If such a driver has two elementary schools and a middle school, they are required to cover a high school run when the contracted driver is on leave since they are already paid by virtue of their contract.
- There are school buses with light loads at selective schools where the runs are too long for a driver to return back to school to pick up a second load. Transportation and schools are able to “double up” the light loaded buses when a driver or drivers are on leave and substitute drivers are not available.
- Drivers, citywide, with the shortest runs (time and mileage) are expected to return to the school to transport children from buses that do not have drivers.

So you see, most uncovered runs are covered by drivers who have space on their buses (double-up) or by drivers who have short runs that enable them to cover their run and return to cover another run when a driver is on leave and a sub is not available.

JAMMAL, ALICE MATTHEWS (DOE) SON, IS STILL IN IRAQ.

He is doing as well as can be expected being every day someone is getting killed. Alice thanks everyone who has been asking about Jammal and who have been praying for him. She hopes he

will be back to the U.S.A. by April 2004 in Fort Hood Texas. As we have watched with interest the capture of Saddam Hussein, Jammal's unit is part of the 4th Infantry, and instrumental in the capture.

ISSUE OF THE MONTH – FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT (FLSA)

What method does your department use to account/document the number of hour's drivers and assistants work in compliance with FLSA? Please share – your school division will not be mentioned.

PHOTOGRAPH OF AN OLD VIRGINIA SCHOOL BUS



Notice the One Red Traffic Warning Light beside the windshield

THE VAPT/DOE 2004 CONFERENCE

June 20 – June 24, 2004

Sheraton Richmond West Hotel

6624 West Broad Street

Richmond

It seems crazy talking about a June conference in December, but as you get older you will notice how time seems to “fly.” The conference will be held at the Sheraton Richmond West Hotel. You may want to go ahead and make your reservations NOW before all of the reserved rooms are taken. The room rate is \$77.00 for a single, double, triple, or quad. Reservations must be received by May 30, 2004! After this date, reservations will be accepted on a space and rate availability basis, and possibly at a higher rate. Each reservation must be guaranteed by one of the following choices:

- a) Credit card
- b) Advance deposit of first night's room and tax for each of the confirmed rooms is due within 14 days of making the reservations.

Enclose a check in the amount when mailing your reservation card. Cancellations must be communicated to the reservations department. If guaranteed by advance deposit, the reservation must be cancelled outside of

7 days of the scheduled arrival date to receive a deposit refund. Check-in time is 3:00pm; checkout time is 12:00pm. No pets are allowed, with the exception of leader dogs. The hotel strives to honor all requests, but does not guarantee room numbers or bed types. Reservations phone number is 1-800-325-3535.

What's New on the VAPT Web Site? Check it out!
www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Finance/VAPT/

NEWS FROM REGION 3

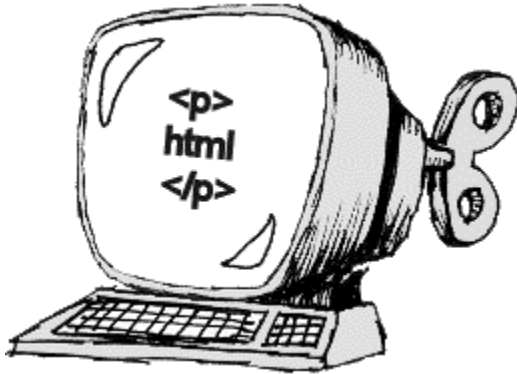
SUBMITTED BY KERMIT SHAFFER

The Region 3 Directors meeting was held on December 2 in Spotsylvania County with twenty-two individuals attending.

- Larry Tolley and Michael Wirt with Sonny Merryman, Inc., gave a power-point presentation on the new C-2 conventional school bus and answered questions from the audience.
- Michael Waltrip, Williamsburg/James City County, made a presentation on how their regional road-e-o is set up. Hopefully, a road-e-o committee comprised of individuals from all interested school divisions can begin work on establishing a centrally located regional road-e-o. As a stop - gap measure, the school divisions were invited to send representatives to the local Spotsylvania School Bus Road-e-o.
- Don Unmussig, DOE, updated us with events at the state level. He supplied us with a template for a comparison of salaries and benefits to be used in budget construction.
- A lively discussion occurred about the Fair Labor Standards Act and the practices utilized by various school divisions to address these standards.
- Individuals were reminded of the advantages of having membership in the Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation.
- The next meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2004.



How are your HTML skills?



Ernie Greene, the VAPT web site editor, has recently bought a weekend place down in the Northern Neck – originally planning to kayak his brains out. What nobody told him, though, was that his weekend house would require just as much work as his house in Northern Virginia – maybe even more! The long and the short of it is that he just doesn't have time to handle two sets of "honey-do" lists AND keep up the VAPT web site like it ought to be.

There's GOT to be someone out there in VAPT-land that is a cracker-jack at web-page design and would like to be the VAPT site editor – most likely someone who's a whole lot more creative than Ernie is!

If you'd like to take over as the web site editor, drop an email to either Ernie at egreene@fcps.edu or Tim Parker at tparker@fcps.edu. They can put you in touch with someone at DOE who can set you up with a PEN account and let you "have at it". Ernie would appreciate it, his wife would appreciate it, and his next-door neighbors at both houses would appreciate it!